

How do I get started?

For more information or to start the process

Phone

1800 136 089 and select option 1 and then
option 3 between 7:30am and 6:30pm
(Monday to Friday)

Email

healthassessment@worksafe.vic.gov.au

More information

WorkSafe Advisory

Phone

1800 136 089

Email

healthassessment@worksafe.vic.gov.au

Website

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Translator and Interpreter Service

Phone

131 450



**Asbestos Council
of Victoria**

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Free health assessment
for stonemasons

What you need to know

WorkSafe is currently offering a free health assessment to all past and present workers in the stonemason industry to identify any crystalline silica related disease.

What is crystalline silica?

Crystalline silica (quartz) is a natural mineral. It's found in stone products such as reconstituted stone, granite and sandstone. It's also in other building materials such as concrete, bricks and mortar.

How much crystalline silica is present depends on the material. Reconstituted stone can have very high crystalline silica content – up to 95%.

Stonemasons may be exposed to crystalline silica dust

When you do things like cut, grind, drill or polish products that contain crystalline silica, it releases very fine dust.

Some of the dust particles are so small you may not be able to see them.

People working in benchtop fabrication are at higher risk because they regularly work with reconstituted stone, which has very high crystalline silica content.

What are the health risks?

Crystalline silica dust can be harmful when it's inhaled into your lungs over a long period of time at low to moderate levels, or short periods at high levels.

Silicosis occurs when crystalline silica dust scars the lungs. It's a serious and incurable disease, with symptoms including shortness of breath, coughing, fatigue and weight loss. In severe cases, silicosis can lead to death, or require a lung transplant.

There are three types of silicosis

Chronic silicosis – This results from long-term exposure (more than 10 years) to low amounts of silica dust. The silica dust causes swelling in the lungs and chest lymph nodes and may cause people to have trouble breathing.

Accelerated silicosis – Historically very rare, occurs after exposure to larger amounts of silica over a shorter period of time (1 to 10 years). Swelling in the lungs and symptoms occur faster than in chronic silicosis.

Acute silicosis – Historically very rare, results from short-term exposure (up to 1 year) to very large amounts of silica. The lungs become very inflamed and can fill with fluid, causing severe shortness of breath and a low blood oxygen level.

Lung cancer and pulmonary massive fibrosis (PMF) can also occur.

How can I limit being exposed to silica dust?

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*, employers must control the risks associated with crystalline silica dust.

Speak to your employer about what controls are available in your workplace to eliminate or reduce your exposure to crystalline silica dust.

We urge you to read the guidance on our website that tells you more about your employer's responsibilities www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/working-reconstituted-stone

It's important that you adhere to the safety procedures in your workplace. Recognise and report hazards and ensure that you always complete your work tasks safely.

How do I find out if I've been exposed?

WorkSafe is currently offering a free health assessment to all past and present workers in the stonemason industry to identify any crystalline silica related disease.

Why should I get a health assessment?

In Victoria there has been an increase in silicosis claims being lodged with WorkSafe and about 80% of these workers have worked in the stonemason industry.

Workers in the stonemason industry may be exposed to crystalline silica dust. Benchtop fabrication workers are at higher risk, because they regularly work with reconstituted stone.

Early identification of respiratory disease, including silicosis, will allow you to have treatment earlier, which can improve your health outcomes.

Am I eligible?

WorkSafe's silicosis assessment program has been developed for people working within the stonemason industry in Victoria. All past and present workers in the stonemason industry are eligible for a free health assessment.